

Traveler

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Laurie Lindberg", is written over a horizontal line.

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Abstract

“Traveler” is a collection of poetry dedicated to one girl’s journey through life. Inspired by scenes from childhood to young adulthood, the poems include topics such as substance abuse, molestation, neglect, sexuality, and relationships. These poems have been placed in travel journals to reflect the life pathway.

Description

At first, I had no idea of what to do for my thesis project. I imagined taking black and white photography of Muncie, launching a magazine, or creating a newsletter. And yet, none of these propositions seemed right for me. One thing was clear—I yearned to explore myself through my thesis. I wanted the topic to be meaningful and perhaps life changing. With these lofty goals in mind, I turned to my love of writing. It’s true that I can’t do many things—such as typing or playing the piano—but I believe I can write. I even enjoy writing, so I knew the process would be fun for me. ‘But what should my thesis express?’ I wondered. At the time of my questioning, my life was (and continues to be) in transition. I was embarking on a long-distance relationship, moving into my first apartment, finishing my last year of college, and examining my identity. These changes caused me to ask, ‘How did I get here? What experiences shaped me into who I am?’ As a result, “Traveler” was born to illuminate key scenes of my journey through life.

To express the topic of traveling, I selected poetry as my thesis format. This decision stemmed from three main reasons: I was tired of writing papers, my boyfriend wrote poetry for his thesis, and I love the medium (and haven’t been able to do much with it in college). With the format settled, I started brainstorming the most significant scenes in my life thus far. It seemed like poetry topics were all I could think about; I

constantly jotted notes to myself, thinking, 'I can't forget to mention this.' And as I was falling asleep, I would begin to write the poems in my head. Sometimes I would rehearse the lines over and over so I wouldn't forget them; if they were particularly good, I'd force myself to get up and write them down (and then would sometimes wake in the morning and realize the words were crap). At my time of creation, I viewed every experience as an opportunity for poetry. I'd listen to strangers to record poignant conversations; I'd also listen to my own thoughts and try to transform them into poems.

When I finally sat down to write, "the words walked right out of my mouth" (quote courtesy of James Brady). This was partly because I was thinking so much about my thesis. It was my world, a world where I could take any experience and show it as meaningful. In addition, writing was easy because my thoughts were right on the surface. Many of these scenes were unresolved in my mind and recreating them with words was therapeutic for me. I wrote poems on substance abuse, molestation, rape, infidelity, and relationships. And while I typed, I cried. Then, I'd edit them and cry some more. Sometimes I even deleted certain poems or hid them in other folders (like the poem about my sexual abuse), but I always came back for them. Although their inclusion was painful, without them, the recreation of my path would be incomplete. I am who I am because of my past experiences. However, I am not bound to them; they alone will not determine my future. As a traveler, I can abandon this path and create a new one at any time.

To my readers: Please enjoy your walk with me. My greatest hope is that my words inspire you to examine your own pathway through life.

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